

Fact Sheet

Loans for Beginning Farmers and Ranchers

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides direct and guaranteed loans to beginning farmers and ranchers who are unable to obtain financing from commercial credit sources. Each fiscal year, the Agency targets a portion of its direct and guaranteed farm ownership (FO) and operating loan (OL) funds to beginning farmers and ranchers.

A beginning farmer or rancher is an individual or entity who (1) has not operated a farm or ranch for more than 10 years; (2) meets the loan eligibility requirements of the program to which he/she is applying; (3) substantially participates in the operation; and, (4) for FO loan purposes, does not own a farm greater than 25 percent of the average size farm in the county. (Note: all applicants for direct FO loans must have operated a farm for at least 3 years.) If the applicant is a business entity, all members must be related by blood or marriage, and all stockholders in a corporation must be eligible beginning farmers.

Maximum Loan Amounts

Maximum amounts of indebtedness are:

- Direct FO or OL: \$200,000
- Guaranteed FO or OL: \$700,000

Downpayment Farm Ownership Loan Program

FSA has a special downpayment FO loan program to assist beginning farmers and ranchers to purchase a farm or ranch. This program also provides a means for retiring farmers to transfer their land to a future generation of farmers and ranchers.

To qualify:

- An applicant must make a cash downpayment of at least 10 percent of the purchase price.
- FSA may provide a maximum amount equal to 30 percent of the purchase price or appraised value, whichever is less. The term of the loan is 10 years at a fixed interest rate of 4 percent.
- The remaining balance may be obtained from a commercial lender or private party. FSA can provide up to a 95 percent guarantee if financing is obtained from a commercial lender. Participating lenders do not have to pay a guarantee fee.
- The purchase price or appraised value, whichever is lower, may not exceed \$250,000.

Sale of Inventory Farmland

FSA advertises acquired farm property within 15 days of acquisition. Eligible beginning farmers and ranchers are given first priority to purchase these properties at the appraised market value for the first 75 days after acquisition. If more than one eligible beginning farmer or rancher offers to purchase the property, the buyer is chosen randomly.

Joint Financing Plan

Beginning farmer or rancher applicants may choose to participate in a joint financing plan that is also available to other applicants. In this program, FSA lends up to 50 percent of the amount financed, and another lender provides 50 percent or more. FSA will charge a reduced interest rate on the loan.

Where to Apply

Applications for direct loan assistance may be made at the FSA county office serving the county where the operation is located. Local FSA offices are listed in the telephone directory under U.S. Government, Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency. For guaranteed loans, applicants must apply to a commercial lender who participates in the Guaranteed Loan Program. Local FSA offices have lists of participating lenders.

For more information about this or any other FSA program, contact your local county office, or visit us on the world wide web at: www.fsa.usda.gov

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